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THE NATION

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CHRISTMAS BOOK SUPPLEMENT

THE FUTURE OF HUMOUR

Mrs. Fisher, or the Future of Humour. By ROBERT GRAVES.
(Kegan Paul. 2s. 6d.)

HUMOUR, if nothing else—ought to be treated seriously. It is a pressing problem of our times. It creates artificial barriers. It wounds. It grieves. It may even cause bloodshed.

I remember, when I was about fourteen years old, that I showed a page of a book I was reading to a brother, and said, "I think that is very funny indeed." He read it through carefully, and when he had finished, remarked, "I don't see anything funny in it at all." The debate grew fierce, and we ended by rolling on the floor, pulling each other's hair, and pummelling each other hard.

I do not think I have grown more tolerant, since that day, of any difference between another man's sense of humour and my own, though life-long estrangement and silent hatred may have taken the place of personal assault; and it seems clear to me that humour, in the more sophisticated kinds, should be prohibited in society and suppressed by law. Irony and sarcasm are obviously unfriendly to the State. Their existence is a peril. Might it not be contended at any time by a man who disobeyed an Act of Parliament, that he supposed the statute to have been conceived in jest? Could it not be argued by a commercial defaulter that he had appended his signature to a contract in sarcasm?

Something of the kind happened, I remember, in a serious dispute about Channel swimming, not long ago.

There must have been many a politician who has begun a speech of delicate irony at Westminster, only to find himself taken *au pied de lettre* on both sides of the House, and compelled in despair to accept the Whip of the opposite party. Goaded by parody, poets rush madly into journalism, or the sea. Pricked by cartoonists, Cabinet Ministers take up commerce, or the fine arts. Even wit becomes a burden, especially for the gastronome. He is impelled to smile wanly between mouthfuls at the extravagances of some self-appointed wag.

One must except, of course, that kind of common humour which arises in the main from the mere mention of certain words, and seems to have remained constant throughout the ages. If there were Stoic philosophers at Athens who did not laugh at a reference to fleas, the rest of the Athenian people certainly did, and so did the people of Elizabethan England. Nor is the happy labour of these hard-worked insects, given the right audience, any less fruitful to-day. It would be interesting to know when mothers-in-law became funny. They seem, like Scotsmen, to have been a later growth. But onions were quite funny in the days of Aristophanes. Κομμιῶν ὑσφοάνοντα. And onions are still funny, though they smile, like Andromache, through tears.

This kind of humour seems to cause no harm to the body politic, and it would be well if all other types were forbidden. If it be urged that laughter has a proved medicinal value, and that some kind of risory exercise must be found for the sophisticated, modern progress can surely find a way. The miracles of applied science are so many that a machine could surely be invented, attachable to the ribs, and so operating on the necessary muscles and nerves through a receiver, or sensitized plate, as to promote all the decent activities of hearty mirth. If a violin chord can shatter a glass, a spoken word, whether it be onions or another, should be capable, when the instrument was properly attuned, of shattering the gravity of the most austere. The butcher uses a humane-killer. Why should the laughter-maker, with his clumsy effort, continue to cause pain?

It will be seen that I have studied the question of humour deeply, and with a desire for nothing but the social weal. Indeed, I often feel that the mental processes of

humour are so complicated that only a rash man would attempt to set them in motion by means of a loose sentence or a careless remark.

"A witticism," says one writer, "is made. Subsequent upon any impression there follows for a moment a 'thought vacuum' in consciousness, during which the association of ideas dives into the unconscious, to reappear again after a thorough elaboration, condensation, and displacement, 'enriched' with errors and superficial associations, as a completed joke. The psychological workshop of the joke is therefore situated in the stratum of the unconscious psychic functioning. This submersion is necessary for the achievement of comic effect: the scene of its origin is to be laid in the pre-conscious system, which is not inaccessible to consciousness, even if it is not exactly at the focusing point of its attention."

Too true. But our author begs the question. "A witticism is made." But what kind of witticism? Supposing that the best of mothers-in-law, diving into this or that unconscious, and remaining there for a while, should emerge not enriched, but impoverished, from the foam? We are haunted by fears and suspicions, by doubt and delay.

I was introduced not long ago to an elderly gentleman from overseas, who said, "I am very pleased to meet you, because humour has always been a strong point in my family. Both my grandfather and my great-uncle were very fond of jokes."

The thought that any remark I made would have to steal, like a frightened ghost, up the long corridors of heredity, until it found a door, terrified me, and I fled.

On the whole, I see no reason why our happy human intercourse should be haunted by this menace of uncertain jokes. Mr. Robert Graves, I notice, in discussing the future of humour, foresees its probable preservation in the pigeon-holes of bureaucracy. He supposes a Board of Humour, organized after the manner of the B.B.C. To this department anyone thinking of a good joke must of necessity apply for the copyright and a certificate. If passed, the joke will be officially graded, registered, and set free for publication.

"Family jokes of a personal kind will be exempted from this ban. 'Controversial' or indecent jokes will not be subject to registration, but will not be publishable."

Humour, in fact, is to be delegated to the Civil Service:—

"But oh, what labour:
Oh prince, what pain."

I prefer to pin my faith, as I have said, to science rather than to officialdom.

Humour, to tell the truth, has used Mr. Robert Graves rather hardly. He professes a taste for jokes that are funny because they have no point at all, though I regret that in discussing these he leaves out the most famous, which is surely that of the old lady who said, "And well may they call it Stonehenge, for I was never so bitten in my life!" (Strange that even in this example we should be carried back to the music-halls and Aristophanes.)

Mr. Graves, again, has crossed lances with the editor of PUNCH on the subject of what is funny and what is not, and has fallen to the ground. There are many battered morions on that field. Even outside PUNCH, Mr. Robert Graves has been much saddened by mirth. Nor do I think he snatches any real comfort even from a department of State humour, under the thrall of a capitalistic Government.

But in my Utopia, whosoever rules, we shall laugh loudly and well. The Bœotian will shake with the satirist. The Philistine and the peculiar people will be as one. Community laughter in the Albert Hall—private laughter in the home—with the help of my simple risory apparatus Mr. Robert Graves and the editor of PUNCH should be able to explode at any given moment with a simultaneous roar.

E. V. KNOX.

A VICTORIAN PEEPSHOW

Illustrators of the Sixties. By FORREST REID. (Faber & Gwyer. £3 3s.)

MR. FORREST REID describes the illustrations in English books and periodicals round about the eighteen-sixties. Frank Dicksee's designs are "masterly," those of Luke Fildes "magnificent"; Frederick Sandys's work is "superb and unsurpassable"; "as mere illustration the works of William Small have never been surpassed"; "Arthur Boyd Houghton's drawings of children have never been surpassed"; "What could be more perfect" than a design by Arthur Hughes; "Linley Sambourne's work is incomparable . . . he is the Cosimo Tura of the Sixties." A person who had never seen the work of these gentlemen would conclude that in mid-Victorian England a school of artists flourished comparable to those of fifteenth-century Italy or nineteenth-century France. Evidently the tide of feeling about the Victorians is turning; iconoclasm is being replaced by even more fanatical idolatry. We may soon expect to hear Tura described as the Linley Sambourne of the Quattrocento, and Titian as the Watts of Venice.

I may be old-fashioned, but after looking at the illustrations in Mr. Forrest Reid's book, I remain convinced that the stream of visual art has never run more thinly than it did in England between 1837 and the late eighties—that is, from the death of Constable to the advent of Sickert, Conder, and Wilson Steer. And of all the forms of visual art produced here during this period none, I think, are more feeble than some of the wood-engravings as illustrated in this book. The drawing was made upon a block of wood, which was then cut by a professional engraver who often hopelessly mistranslated the draughtsman's intentions. Mr. Forrest Reid, in one interesting case, reproduces both the drawing and the engraving. The drawing (by Pinwell) is a precious slight affair; but such delicacy as it has is altogether lost in the engraving. Evidently the work of the engravers varied enormously; the skill of some was extraordinary and worthy of a better use. But it is not surprising to find Rossetti, one of the few real artists with whom this book is concerned, falling into rage and despair at the sight of his drawing when engraved. Yet the engraver in question seems to have been very skilful. Most of the draughtsmen had little or no regard for the material in which they were setting the engraver to work. It is noticeable that the two best of them, Whistler and Keene, were also in this respect exceptional. They drew expressly for the medium, avoiding the cross-hatching which gives to most of the engravings so detestable a texture. Another artist who managed well in this respect was the unhappy Simeon Solomon, who imitated the technique of Rembrandt's etchings. As a horrid contrast, examine the engravings of Burne-Jones and du Maurier.

Mr. Forrest Reid's comments may be regarded merely as fascinating examples of the extravagance to which the collector's passion may lead; his text is in other respects a model of iconography, prepared with enormous care. With a little more humour and a lot less enthusiasm he might have made an amusing and even charming book. Forget that these illustrations can be considered as works of art, and their adventitious "period" flavour can be enjoyed. They carry you to a remote world, where there are always flowers, or moonlight, or snow. Young ladies daydream on piano-stools, or on rocking chairs with books open on their laps. Dogs and cats are stretched obedient on the hearthrug. Tea is poured out of silver urns beneath a cedar-tree; haymakers and saddlers and reapers go about their peaceful ploys. Sometimes there is tragedy: a young man burying his whiskers in his hands, agonized with remorse, a girl watching at a deathbed or lamenting an even more irreparable loss. But, above all, it is a world packed with children, little girls learning their lessons by the light of a fire, little boys playing or fighting, children well and children ill, children lost and children found, children in church and children in churchyards. They played a far greater (though quieter) part in life in the sixties than they do now; more of them were born, more died; and parents were not pre-

pared to pay any price in order to get their offspring out of their sight at the earliest possible age. I do not wish to suggest that the increase in preparatory schools has any relation to the decline in book illustration. For one thing I do not believe that there has been a decline, save perhaps in quantity. The camera has replaced the engraver, and to a great extent the draughtsman. But in France at any rate there is more good book illustration than ever before: almost all the best artists have tried their hand at it. An admirable example is the edition of the *Elegies* illustrated by Maillol with woodcuts which have recently been exhibited in London. And here we have Mr. McKnight Kauffer's illustrations to the *Nonesuch Burton*. In both cases the designs are conceived strictly in terms of the material, wood. Perhaps they would seem poor affairs to Mr. Forrest Reid, when compared with the illustrations of the sixties. But in these matters dispute is useless.

RAYMOND MORTIMER.

OLD FRIENDS

WHAT a pleasure it is to see so many of one's old friends all gathered together at the same table! Here are Goldsmith and Johnson reunited after 150 years, and the oldest of old friends, Montaigne, and Sterne and Voltaire, and Jane Austen and George Meredith, and the curious spectacle of Flaubert cheek by jowl with Captain Marryat. And what fine new clothes the generous and skilful publishers have provided in honour of the occasion! Let us pay our respects, as is only right, first to the ladies. And *prima inter pares* is the incomparable Jane Austen. No one could want a more elegant and pleasanter edition of "Persuasion" than that in the Bath Edition (Howe, 10s. 6d.), printed in monotype Baskerville, with a very well designed page. It has six colour plates and some pencil drawings by Pearl Binder. Then there is "The Complete Novels of Jane Austen" in one volume (Heinemann, 8s. 6d.), a remarkable instance of modern book production, for its 1,400 pages are really well printed in reasonably large type. Another lady, less well known, is Sarah Fielding, the novelist's sister, who is represented in a pleasant little volume containing "The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia" (Scholartis Press, 7s. 6d.).

Of the others, who are men, Montaigne must come first. What better present could there be than "The Essays of Michael Lord of Montaigne," in Florio's translation, and with an introduction by Desmond MacCarthy, published in three volumes by Messrs. Dent at 22s. 6d. the set? Uniform with the Montaigne is Boswell's "Tour to the Hebrides," in one volume (Dent, 7s. 6d.). With Boswell and Johnson must be mentioned Goldsmith's "Vicar of Wakefield," in a very pleasant volume, with an introduction by Oswald Doughty (Scholartis Press, 8s. 6d.).

The Bodley Head illustrated editions of old masterpieces are well known in their black wrappers, and make handsome presents. The handsomest this year is, perhaps, Sterne's "Tristram Shandy," illustrated by John Austen (25s.). There is, too, "Selected Poems" of Swinburne, with an interesting introduction by Mr. Humbert Wolfe, and illustrated by Harry Clarke (21s.). Then there are two translations of famous French books: Voltaire's "Candide" (together with some of the lesser "romans"), translated by Mr. Aldington and illustrated by Norman Tealby (21s.), and Flaubert's "Madame Bovary," illustrated by John Austen (21s.).

A beautifully produced book is Marryat's "Jacob Faithful," in two volumes (Constable, 42s.), and it has a delightful introduction by Professor Saintsbury on Marryat's works. And coming nearer to contemporary literature, a book which might tempt some people is "The Complete Poetical Works of George Meredith," with notes by Professor Trevelyan, which was first published in 1912 and is now reprinted (Constable, 8s. 6d.).

A word, too, should be said in favour of "The Ormond Poets," published by Mr. Noel Douglas (boards, 2s.; paper, 1s.); the new volumes in this charming series are Marvell, Surrey and Wyatt, Keats, and Burns. In each case the selection of poems has been made by Mr. and Mrs. Cole.

Cambridge Books

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AN APOLOGY TO THE HUMORISTS

IT seems an easy job to review a score of humorous books in a couple of columns, especially when a methodical literary editor has sent them to you in good time; yet here we are at the appointed day for sending in the copy, and I have not written a word. Let me explain how it happened.

"I will just look through them in the evenings," said I, "and then I shall be able to dash off an article summing them all up. Here they all are. I think I'll begin with 'The House at Pooh Corner,' by A. A. Milne, with decorations by E. H. Shepard (Methuen, 7s. 6d.). Where is it?"

That was the first snag. It was nowhere to be found. It "subsequently transpired" (to use Mr. Kipling's poetical language) that my daughter had taken it to school, and she assures me that it is a worthy sequel to "Winnie-the-Pooh," which she considers the highest praise that she could possibly give it.

I turned to the brothers Knox, who have produced three books between them this autumn. "Essays in Satire," by Ronald A. Knox (Sheed & Ward, 7s. 6d.), is, the author says, "a patchwork," designed to answer the question, frequently asked, "Where can I get hold of that thing you wrote some years ago about Such and Such?" It might be supposed that the book could be adequately sampled in half an hour, but that makes no allowance for time expended in enjoying it, and I, at any rate, found it impossible to stop reading these essays until I was brought up short by the end of them. There is a lovely bit of spoof called "The New Sin," for instance, and an analysis of Trollope's confused geography of Barsetshire, and—but I must stop, or Ronald Knox will take as much of my space as he has taken of my time.

The other Knox, "Evoe," has perpetrated "Here's Misery!", a book of burlesques, illustrated by Eric Fraser (Methuen, 6s.). Anyone who has read his parody of Theodore Dreiser will buy this book to read the other parodies, and anyone who hasn't, should do so forthwith. Messrs. Methuen have also reproduced in a handsome volume "Mr. Punch's County Songs," by E. V. Lucas, illustrated by E. H. Shepard (10s. 6d.). Everybody must have seen at least some of these jolly things in PUNCH, and many will be glad to have them collected together.

By the time I had finished the Knoxes, I was beginning to be alarmed at my rate of progress, so I passed hurriedly on to the picture books. There are four of these: "Caricature of To-day," with an Introduction by Randall Davies (The Studio, 7s. 6d. and 10s. 6d.); "Poems upon Several Occasions by Persons of Quality," edited by R. D. (Peter Davies, 3s. 6d.); "Some More," a book of drawings by George Morrow (Methuen, 10s. 6d.); and "E. and O. E.," a book of drawings, including eight pages in colour, by Fougasse (Methuen, 10s. 6d.). It should be easy, I thought, to dispose of these in a few minutes, there is not much reading matter in them, and the Morrow and Fougasse things are collected from PUNCH. But I was reckoning without the rich humour of George Morrow and the dexterity of Fougasse—I had made no allowance for the time spent in laughing. "Caricature of To-day" seems to be misnamed. It is a sweeping review of international cartoons from Hogarth and Leonardo di Vinci to Dubout and Bib, and to anyone interested in caricature it is extraordinarily interesting. "Poems upon Several Occasions" are limericks written by such distinguished people as Naomi Mitchison, Edward Marsh, and Charlotte Haldane, to fit Victorian illustrations.

It was now the eve of the appointed day for sending in copy, and I determined to be firm with myself and with Mr. A. P. Herbert, who has collected (again from PUNCH) his "profound studies of life and character, literature, drama, and the film," under the title of "Honeybubble and Co." (Methuen, 6s.). But who can be firm with a man who tells you on the first page that Mr. Honeybubble had a "high-pitched, harsh but kindly voice, like a well-intentioned saw"?

By the time I had reread Mr. Herbert (with immense profit) the situation was desperate. I had still eleven unopened books on my table: "Alice in the Delighted States," by Edward Hope, with illustrations by Rea Irvin (Routledge, 7s. 6d.), an amusing satire for those who can bear to

see Alice vulgarized. "Why Not? Curly Tales," by Tony Galloway, with woodcuts by the author (Knopf, 5s.)—it may be that Mr. Galloway has invented a new kind of humour, I am sure it is new, but not sure if it is humour. "The Mikado," by Sir W. S. Gilbert, with eight delightful illustrations in colour by W. Russell Flint, and many equally delightful drawings in pen and ink by C. E. Brock (Macmillan, 7s. 6d.). "Fairings," a Yorkshire Miscellany, by Dorothy Una Ratcliffe, illustrated by Fred Lawson (Lane, 21s.), an agreeable volume about Yorkshire country folk, in prose and verse. Four attractive little anthologies produced by the Medici Society, namely: "The Light Fantastic: A Short Programme of Dances," with decorations by Claude Lovat Fraser (3s. 6d.); "Mongrel, Puppy, Whelp, and Hound; being a Booklet in Praise of Dogs of all kinds," with decorations by Claude Lovat Fraser (3s. 6d.); "A Little Book of Conceited Secrets and Delights for Ladies" (old-world recipes) (2s. 6d.), and "A Chaplet of Flowers," an Anthology, by Eleanour Sinclair Rohde (2s. 6d.); any one of these would make a charming Christmas card for an aunt or hostess. "Meet These People," by Reginald Arkell, with caricatures by Bert Thomas (Jenkins, 3s. 6d.); a book of light verse, appropriately illustrated. "The Privacy Agent," by B. K. Sandwell, illustrated by A. Lismore (Dent, 7s. 6d.); a volume of Canadian humour by a McGill Professor of Economics, which challenges comparison with Stephen Leacock and comes off second-best. And "The Week-End Book," in a new, enlarged, and illustrated edition (Nonesuch Press, 6s., 8s. 6d., and 12s. 6d.).

I was finally destroyed by "The Week-End Book" in this definitive edition. It is a wonderful anthology, containing an excellent selection of great poems, hate poems, and state poems; admirable advice on food and drink, the Law and how to break it, and first aid, and many other items of information and amusement. There could be no better companion for an idle holiday, and no worse companion for a late reviewer than this entertaining book. It is the ideal Christmas present, but it is largely responsible for the absence of an article on humorous books from the Christmas Book Supplement.

P. I.

CHRISTMAS GIFT BOOKS

How often in the examination of a friend's bookcase, if he be blessed with no very firm literary inclinations, I have caught myself wondering by what series of chances his books have come to be companions on his shelves. It is easy to detect the novels bought on railway journeys, his school prizes, the few poets which his wife, perhaps, brought into the common pot, but why should he ever have invested in an edition de luxe of Omar Khayyam, in that bloated, over-illustrated Pickwick, in Mr. Rackham's designs for "A Midsummer Night's Dream"? The answer, of course, is that he did not buy them. They were Christmas presents—for at this time of the year there is a great demand for these extravagant volumes, many of which find their way to unfriendly bookcases or are used as decorations for occasional tables.

Some have fortunately a more permanent value, and I count as one of these a volume of fifty-six drawings by Joseph Pennell, "A London Reverie" (Macmillan, 25s.), not the least for its introduction by J. C. Squire. This is a most happy piece of writing, describing as it does the London of twenty years ago which Pennell's drawings illustrate. Mr. Squire dwells on his early struggles as a writer, and one is sorry to learn that his repulses included one from THE NATION. But when armed with a letter to H. W. Massingham he said that he wanted to write about "almost anything, especially poetry," Massingham said, "They all say that"—and, adds Mr. Squire, thinking perhaps of his own youthful callers to-day, "They do." It was not, I am afraid, a very impressive method of approach.

Side by side with Pennell's generous volume is one more slim by Mr. Handslip Fletcher, "Changing London" (Methuen, 10s. 6d.). This is prefaced by some historical notes by Mr. A. E. Richardson. Mr. Fletcher's work, so familiar to readers of the SUNDAY TIMES, is more severe than Pennell's, but to a lover of London there is something very



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There can be few who have bestowed more loving labour on the study of sea-paintings than Mr. E. Keble Chatterton, and the handsome volume which the Bodley Head has produced, under his authorship, "Old Sea Paintings" (42s.), contains over a hundred illustrations in colour and in black and white, all of which, with two exceptions, are from the famous Macpherson collection. Mr. Chatterton writes extremely well and instructively, in terms understood by the layman, on a doubly technical subject. His book is a valuable possession.

A new edition of "The Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins" is published this Christmas by Dent (21s.). Robert Paltrock's hero has been described as "the illegitimate offspring of no very natural conjunction," but whether or not he is derived from the joint fancies of Daniel Defoe and Dean Swift, his adventures amongst the flying Indians still make pleasant reading (illustrated by Edward Bawden). In "Eastern Windows" (Hutchinson, 21s.), Elizabeth Keith takes extracts from her own letters as the basis of the text which accompanies her drawings made in Japan, Korea, and China. Her paintings are often very charming, influenced as they are by native models, and her desultory notes reveal many interesting experiences. This is an attractive volume—but why the hideous border lines round each page which belong to the worst period of book production?

An edition of Sir Richard Burton's translation of "Tales from the Gulistan" (Allan, 10s. 6d.) has illustrations by Mr. John Kettlewell. These are black and white pen drawings of delicacy and originality. The philosophy and poetry of the Sheikh Sa'di are here presented in a book that is itself of artistic value.

Laurence Binyon edits (for The Studio) a volume of "The Poems of Nizami" (30s.). He contributes a long explanatory introduction to the lovely reproductions of those Persian paintings which form one of the chief treasures of the British Museum. These reproductions are as near perfect as can be.

If ever there was an amateur poet it is Mr. Will H. Ogilvie, and his love is of horses and the leather of their reins. His jingles which, in "A Handful of Leather" (Constable, 14s.), mean nothing to this reviewer, have evidently an appeal to those who share his tastes. I well remember staying in the house of a keen sportsman and almost sharing his delight on a Wednesday morning when PUNCH appeared on the breakfast table with "To a Brace of Setters (Labelled for the North)." Mr. Ogilvie succeeds in such enthusiasms.

Then there is Mr. Donald Maxwell, who, unlike most artists, draws best when he supplies his own libretto. There are two books of his on the list—"Travels in Hope" (Hodder & Stoughton, 12s. 6d.), a collection of light essays which he has illustrated for Mr. James Milne, and "The Landscape of Thomas Hardy" (Cassell, 12s. 6d.), in which, using a great many extracts from Hardy, he succeeds in giving point to his pictures. Mr. Maxwell must forgive a genuine admirer of his work if he says that he thinks the Hardy book much the better of the two.

Should "Manon Lescaut" be given the dignity of a new edition de luxe, illustrated with a grotesque fervour by Alastair? The Lord or the Abbé knows, but for my part "Manon Lescaut" is better left in a small and intimate form—though in this case the Bodley Head have reason to be proud of a fine piece of printing (42s.).

James Mabbe's translation of "The Spanish Ladie" and two other stories of Cervantes (1640) is issued, with curious illustrations by Douglas Percy Bliss, by the Oxford University Press (21s.). This is a very welcome reproduction.

A newly illustrated and imposingly produced edition of Anatole France's volume of stories called "The Well of St. Clare," is published by the Bodley Head (16s.). The illustrations by Frank C. Papé have a certain grim attraction, half humorous and half sinister—and with a fine binding the book becomes an acceptable Christmas present.

Mr. Thomas Walker, Gent., of the early part of the nineteenth century, was no glutton. In his "Art of Dining" (Cayme Press, 21s.), indeed, he pleads for small parties and for modest, but exquisite meals. Though he discusses more

extravagant banquets, herrings, hashed mutton, and apple fritters are to him a satisfying feast. His book is full of the soundest advice, and for all its remoteness would be valuable to modern hosts. This edition has a lively introduction by Mr. Filson Young, and some good woodcut decorations by Mr. J. M. Dixon.

Coloured engravings in wood by Hester Sainsbury adorn a reprint of "Eve's Legend" (1824), published by Etchells & Macdonald (63s.), a rather tedious joke of Lord Holland's in which his rhymed nonsense is told in words all containing the letter E. The decorations may give it a collector's value.

Miss Catherine Donaldson has chosen the twenty-first book of Sir Thomas Malory to decorate with twelve of her woodcuts. If these vary a good deal in intention, they are all executed with sincerity and skill (Macmillan, 10s.).

The Cresset Press reproduces Matthew Stevenson's "The Twelve Moneths" (1661), and incorporates in the book a useable diary for 1929 (7s. 6d.). This, again, is a beautifully produced book, so much so that though its possessors may enjoy old Stevenson's running commentary on the seasons, and Miss Celia Fiennes' woodcuts, they may hesitate to deface it on their own account.

With much erudition and great industry Sir James Merchant has, in "The Madonna" (Longmans, 18s.), produced an excellent anthology devoted to the Virgin. His range in prose and verse allusions is a very wide one. Sir Charles Holmes contributes an introduction on "The Madonna in Art." The book is very fully illustrated, but one could have wished it to be more fully indexed.

Mr. Rackham contents himself with quite a modest volume in Washington Irving's "Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (Harrap, 10s. 6d.). This amusing satire on witchcraft, with its glimpses of early American country life, affords Mr. Rackham all the opportunities he desires to give goblin faces to gnarled trees.

So different are the two remaining books on my list that they should not be made to stand together. One is the Studio's volume of "Flower and Still Life Painting," edited by Geoffrey Holme (10s. 6d.), with an introduction by T. W. Earp, and has a number of coloured reproductions, the printing of which is as perfect as that in the Nizami volume. The last is "Æsop's Fables" (Benn, 10s. 6d.), in which twenty-four fables are printed from the version of Sir Robert L'Estrange and illustrated by Marcus Gheeraerts, the elder. A most desirable small volume.

J. B. S. B.

ART BOOKS

Artists and Their Friends in England from 1700 to 1799. By WILLIAM T. WHITLEY. Two vols. (Medici Society, 42s.)

English Art in the Eighteenth Century. By C. REGINALD GRUNDY. (The Studio, 10s. 6d.)

Aubrey Beardsley, the Man and his Work. By HALDANE MACFALL. (John Lane, 15s.)

Millet. By PAUL GSELL. Translated by J. LEWIS MAY. (Lane, 5s.)

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Peeps at Arts and Crafts. By GERTRUDE M. HECTOR. (Black, 2s. 6d.)

MR. WILLIAM WHITLEY, author of "Artists and Their Friends in England from 1700 to 1799," is possessed of the two necessary qualities for writing a book of this kind; he has, first, indefatigable enthusiasm and industry in research, combined with the thoroughness and patience of the true scholar, and, secondly, the imagination to select what is really interesting and the ability to present it in a well-written and extremely readable form. His information is collected from the records of the Royal Academy, the Society of Arts, and the old Incorporated and Free Societies of Artists, the note-books of George Vertue, letters and MSS. at the British Museum and the Record Office, contemporary newspapers, and many other sources. The two volumes are a fascinating study of eighteenth-century artistic society, full of amusing gossip, character study, and anecdote about

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the painters themselves, their sitters, their patrons, and other distinguished people. It covers, with extreme thoroughness and circumstantial detail, the period from the foundation of Sir Godfrey Kneller's Academy at Great Queen Street to the election of Turner to the Royal Academy on the night of December 31st, 1799, and one of its most interesting points is the information it gives on the subject of contemporary criticism, which often differs strangely from the later judgments of posterity. The book is very pleasantly produced and printed, with several illustrations, by the Medici Society. Mr. Grundy's "English Art in the Eighteenth Century" is a useful and compact *résumé* of the activities of English artists and craftsmen during the same period in the various branches of the fine and applied arts. About half the book is devoted to painting, but he discusses also Miniatures, Sculpture, Engravings, Architecture, Furniture, Metalwork, and Ceramics, and though in so small a space a good deal is necessarily omitted, he manages to pack a large amount of valuable information into the different sections. The book contains nearly ninety illustrations, and is extremely cheap at the price.

Mr. Macfall's study of Beardsley and his work has the interest of having been written by an art-critic of that period and one who knew Beardsley himself and other distinguished figures in the artistic world of the nineties. In a style which is often tiresome by reason of its affectations, its repetitions, and its highly coloured artificiality reminiscent of some of the "Decadents" themselves, he tells the tragic story of Beardsley's short life, of his perpetual struggle against consumption and his early death at the age of twenty-five. He gives also a clear account of his work, dividing it into different periods according to his changing styles and according to the different signatures he used. Mr. Macfall is a fervent admirer of Beardsley's later and best work, but is not blinded by enthusiasm, as some writers on Beardsley have been, into thinking that everything that came from his pen, even his very early work, is a masterpiece.

Jean François Millet is the subject of a new volume in Messrs. John Lane's useful little "Masters of Modern Art" series. M. Paul Gsell gives an account of the life and work of the Norman peasant-artist, who was decried in his own time as a Socialist and an apostle of ugliness, and who endured terrible hardships before he obtained artistic recognition. There are sixty illustrations. "The Studio" adds to its "Famous Water-Colour Painters" and "Masters of Etching" series, Turner and Mr. G. L. Brockhurst, A.R.A., R.E., respectively. The former has eight good reproductions in colour, which would be more representative of his work in general if they had included some of the earlier water-colours. The latter volume reproduces twelve of Mr. Brockhurst's etchings, which are technically good, though entirely undistinguished and in subject rather monotonous, and has an extravagantly laudatory introduction by Mr. Malcolm Salaman. The impression given by the jacket-design of "Engraving Old and Modern" is discouraging. But Mr. Martindale is well up in his subject, both on the historical and technical sides: he is himself an engraver, and has compiled a useful and practical handbook for students of the subject.

Mr. W. J. Menzies attempts, in a book of some two hundred pages (many of which are taken up with bare lists of artists and craftsmen and their dates, schools, &c.), to give a practical guide to collectors of all kinds of antiques, in which term he includes not only English and French furniture, pottery, and porcelain, but also oil-paintings of all the European schools, prints, etchings, and mezzotints. So small a space, necessarily, cannot contain an exhaustive study of so large a subject, but, adhering strictly to the practical, rather than the artistic, side, Mr. Menzies has been able to collect and tabulate in an easily approachable form an amazingly large amount of useful information and advice, illustrated with a number of well-chosen reproductions. "Peeps at Arts and Crafts" is not quite so foolish as the publishers' "puff" would lead one to suppose. "The keynote of the whole," they tell us, is "that Art is just skilful, loving workmanship of any kind." But Miss Hector has a good deal of knowledge, and outlines the general history of art in a fairly intelligent, though essentially "popular," manner.

ANGUS DAVIDSON.

BOOKS FOR BOYS

WE seem to remember that, on the arrival of a bundle of new books in our playroom, the habit of youth was to explore the largest first. Reverting to this order of reading, we now brighten our prosaic age with the agreeable bigness of the Annuals, which defy any lugubrious moralizations that enough is as good as a feast, or that David beat Goliath. It is the gay season when *Too Much* is let out of his dungeon. He wears a very jovial expression, after all. Inspired by him, we sit down to these well-stuffed lucky-bags of prose, verse, colour-plates, black-and-white engravings, with benevolent avidity. Here is "The Scout Annual" (Pearson, 10s. 6d.), and as we had let our subscription lapse earlier in the century, we are not disappointed on finding that it is in fact Vol. XXIII. of the "Scout." We shall, after Christmas, make a toasting-fork according to the instructions on page 534, and, while the Test Matches grow longer, we shall brood on these "Pictures that Point the Path to Cricket." The large department of Fiction will burn many candles. "The Grand Book for Boys" (Milford, 5s.) makes us wonder how Mr. Strang gets in and out of his study. His excellent Works and those which he edits were a housing problem to us years ago, but, true, we only tenanted a locker. "The Grand Book" is a gratifying miscellany, with such instructive papers as Major Turner's on "The Air Pilot," and such entertaining stories as Mr. Hadath's "Living Up To It." Not dissimilar, for scope, good sense, and good writing is the "Boys' All-Round Book," edited by Mr. Walter Wood (Nelson, 5s.); who could refuse the lure of Driver John J. Francis, telling us of his "Lord Nelson," or Captain Knight on "Photographing the Golden Eagle"? This volume contains several fine photographs. "Blackie's Boys' Annual" (5s.) swells the banquet of stories, articles, illustrations. Those who wish to catch wild elephants, dream of buried treasures, or make shadows pass their time, will peruse it; and so will many others. "Schoolboys' Holiday Book" (Collins, 5s.) offers another combination of adventure, sport, and study: here is "How to Build and Fly a Model Aeroplane," with diagrams which the nimble modern schoolboy will instantly digest. "The Schoolboy's Annual" (R.T.S., 3s. 6d.) is confined to stories, but those are as unconfined as the air which blows over football field and prairie and coral island. Lady Cynthia Asquith's "Treasure Cave" (Jarrold, 6s.) is not so heroical; its strangest beast is Mr. Denis Mackail's Dilemma, whose horned front he illustrates in the most authentic text and pictures; in the same cave we find the fancy of Mr. de la Mare and the mysteriousness of Mr. Machen. "Collins' Zoo and Animal Annual" (5s.), edited by Mr. H. Mortimer Batten, needs no recommendation to English boys, though it may disturb them with vain ambitions of the kind which Charles Lamb's schoolfellow had, who smuggled a pet donkey up to the roof of his dormitory. All will enjoy such reading as Mr. Gillespie's Zoo personalities. And after all these, the "Boy's Own Annual" (R.T.S., 12s. 6d.) comes in! Over a thousand pictures seems like the very spirit of Christmas, not to mention seven hundred pages of choice reading.

So much for our first course; we now seize on the other kind of annuals—the classics. Mr. Harvey Darton superintends a new "Gulliver" (Wells Gardner, 7s. 6d.), a very sensible reprint, with an introduction worth anybody's attention, drawings by Mr. René Bull, and reproductions of the portraits and maps in Swift's first edition. Messrs. Collins have contrived to comprise "The Three Musketeers" and "Twenty Years After" in one volume (7s. 6d.), and to adorn them with views of chivalry and crisis in colour or half-tone. The designs and bright tints of Mr. H. M. Brock's art embellish Messrs. Macmillan's newest edition of "The Heroes" (6s.); Mr. E. H. Shepard brings his delicacy of romance and humour to the latest printing of Mr. Kenneth Grahame's "Golden Age" (Lane, 7s. 6d.).

From this point we find ourselves among the entirely new books, of which there is no shortage. The world of school is as productive as ever. Mr. Richard Bird, with his clear and friendly tones, narrates "School House v. The Rest" (Milford, 5s.), and it will suggest the hold he has on possibilities if we note that the book is largely concerned with the disappearance of some valuable items from the

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school library. Mr. St. John Pearce begins and ends "Slogger" and Co." (Ward, Lock, 5s.) with cricket; the interior is also mostly cricket; there is an ingenious admixture of comedy and excitement, occasioned by a search for a hidden collection of stamps. "The Short Term at Greyminter" (Collins, 6s.) is Mr. Hylton Cleaver's contribution to the mysteries; it is indeed irregular for a new boy to be found in a midnight thunderstorm, "bound to the pavilion rails, and blindfold," exposed to the howling of the gale, but Greyminter finally finds out the truth. Mr. D. Stapleton presents "Donovan of Ford's" (Chambers, 3s. 6d.), "six feet in height and broad in proportion." In course of time this young giant has to face black appearances, and is publicly flogged—but emerges in full glory. "Boys of Gresham House," by Mr. M. H. Kelly (B.O.P. office, 2s. 6d.), is a peaceful account of schoolboys and their masters and masters, without heroic extensions. "Rival Schools at Schooner Bay," by Mr. R. A. H. Goodyear (Ward, Lock, 3s. 6d.), is a tale of mild vendetta.

Adventure now leaves the St. Dominic's district, and falls in with Mr. Strang again, going a-smuggling; "The Riders" (Milford, 3s. 6d.) is full of life, as anybody who knows Kent and feels a freshness in the Nelson period will agree. Mr. Strang truly makes his fires burn and cauldrons bubble. "A Buccaneer's Log," by Mr. C. M. Bennett (Nisbet, 5s.), sets the cutlasses in motion and the wild bullets flying with tremendous gusto. Admiral Dago, Captain One-Eye, Skull Island—there will be clutchings of fists over these. If bears and Indians are preferred, Mr. Everett McNeil's "With Kit Carson in the Rockies" (Chambers, 3s. 6d.) can supply a profusion of realism, the author's plan being to honour the trappers of the West in their relation to American history. "Lone Scouts of Crusoe Island," by Mr. F. H. Dimmock (Pearson, 3s. 6d.), affects no such relation, but the boys had a "glorious time." Colonel Brereton's picture of British heroes in "Under Haig in Flanders" (Blackie, 3s. 6d.) is equally unrelated to history, although we hear of the Somme and machine-guns in it. "The Flying Squad" (Harrap, 6s.) is the work of Colonel Bishop and Major Stuart-Wortley, who have collaborated with great success in a tale of genuine surprises, of faithful descriptions, and of instructions in the principles of airmanship. Mr. P. F. Westerman brings off his latest series of detailed incident, "A Shanghai Adventure" (Blackie, 6s.), in China seas; he is a veritable circumnavigator of the world of boys' books. Dr. Greville Macdonald as author and Mr. F. D. Bedford as artist combine romantically in "Count Billy" (Dent, 6s.)—a blend of epic and idyll in the story of dreams that came true. The most delightful of the books on our list for appearance is Mr. Beaumont's "Sea Magic" (Lane, 7s. 6d.), which the author's excellence as a printer and Mr. Wyndham Payne's wit and grace in coloured engravings distinguish at once. The story, for the younger sort, is one of those circumstantial and extremely natural "illusions" for which Mr. Beaumont has a great talent.

In a similar style Miss Marjorie Bowen, whose book is called "The Winged Trees" (Blackwell, 6s.), gives her fantasy the exactness and fine colour which make "uncharted country" like home. "The Griffin," by E. M. Channon (Heinemann, 6s.), is an excursion into the homes and haunts of heraldic beasts, with buried treasure at the end; "The Prison of Glass," by H. L'Estrange Malone (Epworth Press, 3s. 6d.), contains four tales, mediæval, magical, and with happy endings. From the Andersen kingdom we go east with Major C. F. Mackenzie, whose "Persian Wonder Tales" (Blackie, 5s.) is a series of abridgements from the "Anwar-i-Suhaili"; with Mr. H. I. Katibah, whose "Other Arabian Nights" (Scribners, 7s. 6d.) is a selection from the fugitive Arabic literature and folk-tales similar to the classic collection; and with Dr. W. H. D. Rouse, continuing his skilful adaptation of Indian folk-tales for English children in "Tom Noddy the Noodle" (Dent, 6s.).

In these last volumes we reach the precincts of Useful Knowledge. "A Child's History of the World," by V. M. Hillier (Allen & Unwin, 7s. 6d.), offers an enormous task with a kindly expression. "Sculpture Shown to the Children," by R. N. D. Wilson, and "Painting," in the same series, by Lawrence Wilson (Jack, 3s. 6d. each), employ the sweetest blandishments in unfolding a hard matter; the

plates are choice and convincing. A new edition of "Everyone's Book of British Natural History" (R.T.S., 6s.) will call forth yet more gratitude to Mr. W. P. Westell, that favourite guide through the fields; the illustrations are beautiful, and the Rev. S. N. Sedgwick, who has provided them, also writes two chapters telling his readers how to obtain such results. In "My Animal Friendships" (Arrowsmith, 5s.) Mr. Cherry Kearton, with pen and camera, invites us into his famous intimacy with an *Æsopian* circle; one of his most curious friends was a spider, who finally "learnt to play with us." "Modern" boys perhaps prefer playing with something on wheels: for them Mr. J. Harrison's "Boy's Book of the Motor-Cycle" (Milford, 5s.) seems a godsend. It is partly historical, but chiefly explanatory of all aspects of the machines now in use, from first principles to rules of the road. Even now motor-cycle adventures seem unaspiring in comparison with the more laborious modes of progress described in "The Book of Polar Exploration," by Miss E. L. Elias (Harrap, 7s. 6d.), a noble chronicle, enriched with an introduction by Mr. R. E. Priestley, of two Antarctic expeditions, and illustrated with abundance of fresh and striking pictures.

BOOKS FOR GIRLS

"WHAT a pity that Mollie Bella is not old enough to appreciate them," we said, as we surveyed the volumes for review in their bright Christmas jackets. Mollie Bella is just fifteen months old. Not that she is indifferent to the books; whenever she sees them she makes energetic attempts to reach them; her joy in hearing them thump on the floor is great; but when she succeeds in capturing one, she turns its pages too rapidly and promiscuously to qualify her as a critic, even the most unconscious.

But there are three schoolgirls of reading age next door, and we decided to let each have a few books of her own choosing and compare judgments with her upon them.

Jessica made a rush for the school stories. As usual, there is a handsome pile, but their promises this year are remarkably unsensational. Not a single wild bull nor a fire. On two covers there are groups of girls practising archery, a very sedate sport, and most of the books deal with mild feuds which have a happy way of straightening out. "Expelled from St. Madern's," by E. M. Channon (Nisbet, 3s. 6d.), is one of the exceptions. Its title is provocative, and it is vividly written and original; the mystery of the "F. G." is cleverly developed—most of the school stories are full of disjointed incidents that peter out before they reach maturity—and it is refreshing for once to meet a headmistress who is not impressive and capable, but weak and forced to rely on others. "Meggy Makes Her Mark," by Christine Chaundler (Nisbet, 3s. 6d.), is another story that grips. We asked Jessica if these two were not easily the best school stories.

"Yes," she said, "I simply couldn't put them down." On "At School with Rachel," by Angela Brazil (Blackie, 6s.), we disagreed. She saw more in it than a mild and uneventful story with an irritating superfluity of exclamation marks and stale phrases.

"Miss Honor's Form," by E. C. Matthews (Blackie, 3s. 6d.), and "The New House Captain," by Dorita Fairlie Bruce (Oxford University Press, 5s.), were both considered "very readable."

"Paddy, the Pride of the School," by Dorothy Dennison (Religious Tract Society, 3s. 6d.), with a definitely religious note, "Terry, the Black Sheep," by May Wynne (Pearson, 3s. 6d.), and "The Dare Club," by Ierne Plunket (Oxford University Press, 2s. 6d.), all tell in not specially original fashion of girls who get into scrapes.

The title of "The Fourth Form at Beverley," by J. L. Herbertson (Collins, 5s.), is rather misleading, for the story is about the thrilling adventures that take place in the holidays, but many will like it none the less on that account.

Jessica's sister, Joyce, asked for historical books, and we had to tell her that there was a dearth of these, and hand her our ewe lamb, "The Doctor's Niece," by Eliza Pollard (Blackie, 1s. 6d.), a spirited little story of the French Revolution. But we advised her to scour the Annuals for



GEOFFREY BLES

CHRISTMAS, 1928.

A very interesting feature of '**BRITISH CAMPAIGNS, 1914-1918**' by Sir ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE (which I have just published in one volume of 1,024 pages at 10s. 6d. net), is the prominence given to the exploits of various regiments and regimental officers. You can hardly find a page which has not a reference to a brave deed performed by some captain or subaltern. As for the history itself, it has been well described by the late Sir William Robertson Nicoll as 'a Classic which will never be superseded.' All the reviewers praise this new and enlarged edition as being extraordinary value for half-a-guinea, and *Truth* says: 'This is a history recorded by a master of romance, who is also an accurate historian. It will make an ideal Christmas present.'

Another successful publication is my new edition of '**MANON LESCAUT**'—in its original and unexpurgated form—with illustrations in colour and line by JOHN AUSTEN. The volume is royal quarto, half vellum gilt; and the edition is limited to 500 copies, each numbered and signed by the artist. Price Three Guineas net. *The Observer* says: 'This large quarto takes us altogether. John Austen surpasses himself in a series of tinted plates which are equally remarkable as art and interpretation.' Very few copies of this edition still remain.

'**HEINE: THE STRANGE GUEST**' (12s. 6d. net), by HENRY BAERLEIN, is a study of the curious temperament of a poet whose impish wit delighted all Europe—with the exception of the German Censorship. In this admirably discursive biography, Heine is portrayed as the youthful idolater of Napoleon; in London ("nothing but fogs, frost and Canning"); and in Paris—the brilliant conversation with Balzac, Meyerbeer, and Eugène Sue, and the long agony of the mattress grave. Mr. J. B. Priestley, in *The Evening News*, calls this book 'a very full and picturesquely account of the great fantastic Jew who was one of the first of the Moderns.'

Those who enjoyed Walter Noble Burns's book '**BILLY THE KID**' will welcome the reappearance of that engaging young homicide in '**HANDS UP!**' (10s. 6d. net), true stories of the old Wild West, by A. B. MACDONALD, who is himself no mean performer with a 'six-shooter.' (Fortunately a rare accomplishment with authors.)

Two new volumes of my FAMOUS TRIALS SERIES (10s. 6d. net each) are: '**THE CASE OF CONSTANCE KENT**', by JOHN RHODE, and '**LANDRU**', by F. A. MACKENZIE, author of '**WORLD FAMOUS CRIMES**'. The former volume gives a full account of that curious murder of a small boy in a Somerset village, which led to the masterly investigation of Jonathan Whicher (Scotland Yard's greatest detective) and the arrest of the victim's sister, a sixteen-year-old girl—a narrative as enthralling as John Rhode's own Mystery Novels. And in '**LANDRU**' the author deals with the strange psychology of the modern Bluebeard and the extraordinary drama of his trial.

'**ILLUSTRATED HISTORY**' (3s. 6d. net) by REGINALD POUND was a very popular feature of *The Daily Express*, and is now published as a book, with an Introduction by Lord Gorell.

To turn to Fiction, FLORENCE RIDDELL's new novel, '**CASTLES IN KENYA**' (published in September), has had an immediate success. It is a tale of Kenya Colony—of love, disillusionment, and a woman's great sacrifice—told in the delightful style which has gained for Florence Riddell such a large and appreciative public.

JOHN RHODE is rapidly gaining the reputation of being one of the best writers of Mystery Novels, and, as *John o' London's Weekly* says, he 'goes on from strength to strength.' His last novel, '**TRAGEDY AT THE UNICORN**', has had a big success and was praised by *The Field* as 'a perfectly gorgeous detective yarn.' His new book, '**THE HOUSE ON TOLLARD RIDGE**', surpasses all his previous novels in cleverness and ingenuity, and should not be missed by anyone who enjoys a really good mystery story. It will appear in January.

'**THE SHUTTLES OF ETERNITY**' is a new book by NETTA SYRETT, the well-known author of '**THE VICTORIANS**' and other novels. It has a special appeal to those interested in psychic problems.

My recent publication of '**IRIS PLAYS BETTER BRIDGE**' (2s. 6d. net), by HUGH TUITE, is not unconnected with the remarkable success of its predecessor, '**TEACHING IRIS AUCTION BRIDGE**', in which Iris, a charming girl with an unfortunate tendency to confuse Spades and Clubs, is gently but firmly instructed by her Godfather. Iris, having learnt the rudiments of the game, is now eager to learn its *finesses*, and again she turns for help to the Sage. . . . Hugh Tuite is a master-hand at teaching Bridge without tears, as everyone knows who has read his most amusing and instructive books, '**THE POTTLETON BRIDGE CLUB**' and '**MRS. POTTLETON'S BRIDGE PARTIES**'. By the way, they are jolly little books to give as Christmas presents. So, too, are '**BRIGHTER FRENCH**' (now in its Fifth large edition); and '**P's & Q's**'—that sinister engine for discovering Character from Handwriting.

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short historical stories, and there she found several that appealed to her, and, incidentally, other absorbing fiction and interesting articles.

The Annuals are many and strong this Christmas. The Religious Tract Society has the knack of packing a great deal of good and well illustrated stuff between the covers of "The Girl's Own Annual" (12s. 6d.). Joyce found that she was forgetting her quest as she pored over articles on furniture, china, travel, dress, going to Court, personality, American universities. "I don't think I should finish this by next Christmas," she said. "Our Girls' Annual" (7s. 6d.) also comes from the Religious Tract Society. It is rather like a younger sister of "The Girl's Own Annual," and it maintains the family tradition well. It contains some good school stories. "Nelson's Annual" (6s.) is frankly more educational than the others, its object being to collect stories, articles, and poems which will make listening-in more enjoyable. It is a good idea, and good people have been called in to carry it out. Sir Henry Newbolt writes on "The New Panels in St. Stephen's Hall," J. Cuthbert Haden on Wagner's "The Ring." Hilaire Belloc, A. T. Quiller-Couch, John Buchan, and W. Beach Thomas are other contributors. There are many excellent coloured plates—though we think the frontispiece might have been better chosen—and some attractive woodcuts by Maurice Foxell. Altogether an Annual worth keeping. "The Grand Book for Girls" (Oxford University Press, 5s.) has all the attributes of an Annual, though not labelled one. Without being very distinguished, it would make an acceptable Christmas present for a schoolgirl. We think that "Collins' Schoolgirls' Annual" (5s.) has made a mistake in introducing "as a new departure a story of adult life," even though it is by "that distinguished writer, Maud Diver." It is a stupid and unsuitable story, quite out of place among fairy-tales and school yarns. "The Oxford Annual for Girls" (Oxford University Press, 5s.) is always attractive and well illustrated. "Number Six Joy Street" (Basil Blackwell, 6s.) is as charming as the numbers that have gone before, and will delight the younger girls. Mabel Marlowe, Laurence Housman, Compton Mackenzie, Algernon Blackwood, and Walter de la Mare all contribute stories of an original character.

"And what is your pleasure?" we said to June, the youngest of the three next-door sisters.

"Fairy-tales, please."

"Then you have come off best, for it is a record fairy-tale year. Whether the great Tinker Bell has put in overtime, or what has happened, goodness knows."

June's eyes glistened at the feast put before her. She really didn't know where to begin, she said, so we suggested her starting on "The Scarlet Herring," by His Honour Judge E. A. Parry (Heinemann, 6s.), as a *hors-d'œuvre*. And a very choice one it turned out to be. "Gamble Gold," by the same author and from the same publisher at the same price, illustrated by Harry Furniss, was also snapped up by June. For some time Sir Edward Parry's delightful books have been out of print, and Messrs. Heinemann have done a good deed in publishing this very attractive edition.

Next, June tackled a fat volume called "Green Magic," a collection of the world's best fairy tales from all countries, edited by Romer Wilson, and beautifully illustrated in colour and line by Violet Brunton (Jonathan Cape, 7s. 6d.), containing old favourites like Puss-in-Boots and Ali Baba, and many new ones from countries as far as China, Roumania, and Serbia. Much less bulky is "The Magic Pawnshop," by Rachel Field (Dent, 6s.), in a very original cover showing witches on broomsticks, columbines and birdcages, but Prinda's adventures are very entertaining, and June liked the little book so much that we gave it to her. Another charming story, though it contains happily impossible aunts, is "A Fairy to Stay," by M. B. Lodge (Oxford University Press, 5s.). "The Little Blue Man" (Dent, 3s. 6d.) is quite out of the common—a translation by May Sweet of a delightful puppet tale by a popular Italian writer for children, Giuseppe Fanciulli. We follow the story of the little cardboard man with keen interest and sympathy, and admire the illustrations by H. I. Bacharach. There is something unusual, too, in the binding of the book. The cover is blank—plain white—but it is made of a material suitable for taking ink or water-colours, so that the owner may ornament it as

he desires. The charming coloured paper jacket is reminiscent of the delightful Italian marionettes.

When Jessica had had her fill of school stories she picked up "The Complete History of the Bastable Family," by E. Nesbit (Benn, 10s.), and said that it was a lucky find. This is the first time that all the adventures of the wonderful five appear in one volume, and it is proof of their charm that in 944 pages they do not outstay their welcome.

"Are you Girl Guides or Brownies?" we asked the girls. "If so, let us recommend you 'The Kengarth Brownies,' by Doris Pocock (Nisbet, 3s. 6d.), very brightly written, and 'The Crisis in Camp Keema,' by Elsie Oxenham (Chambers, 5s.)." May Baldwin always produces a good story, though her style is rather stilted. "The Twins Make Good" (Chambers, 3s. 6d.) has a heroine with wonderful "backbone," who is yet convincing.

"What's this—more fairy-tales?" said June, picking up a solid tome called "The Golden Staircase" (Nelson, 10s. 6d.). But we found it to be something better still—a collection of poems, admirably chosen by Louey Chisholm, which contains all that we expect to find and much more. It would be difficult to imagine a more inspiring school prize.

"I say, here's 'Alice in Wonderland,'" said Joyce, "that's not a new book. But oh, the pictures are quite different from ours." It is impossible to see a bobbed and red-haired Alice without a shock, and bob her in our own minds we never will, but even those who have grown up with Tenniel will delight in the excellent pictures by Harry Rountree and the beautifully produced edition that Collins have published at 7s. 6d. In the welter of new books how refreshing it is to find new editions of "the classics." When all's said and done, the best books for girls that we have seen this Christmas are "Mansfield Park" and "Sense and Sensibility" (Dent, 5s. each), and our only regret is that the print of these volumes, attractively got up and illustrated by C. E. Brock, is rather small. But it would be churlish to quarrel at Christmas time, and the girls and, no doubt, their parents will bless the publishers for speeding holidays that may be wet or that tend to be too long, as in real life they sometimes actually are. If there is no "book of the year" which one would like to see reappear in future years, there are many that are entertaining, and the general brightness and charm of the get-up and illustrations are a really valuable contribution to a season destined to be festive.

BOOKS FOR SMALL CHILDREN

SOME notable reprints this year raise the old question of whether children's books are what they used to be. Messrs. Blackie offer "Struwwelpeter" (1s. 6d.), and Messrs. Macmillan have "Water-Babies" (6s.), and Messrs. Heinemann Judge Parry's "Katawampus" (6s.), and the "First Book of Krab" (6s.). Of course, to the grown-up reviewer, these books have a sentimental aura which must be lacking in anything published later than 1910. But, discounting this as far as possible, they are still formidable rivals of the newcomers. There seems to have been some quality in the Victorian atmosphere—Early, Middle, and Late—which made it propitious to the creation of children's books. They preached a good deal, and children like preaching, and when they preached they did it with a whole heart and a lively sense of humour—"Pater was more sad than angry, and taking them one by one he locked them in different rooms by themselves. Then he went out and watered the birch-tree with tear-water" ("Katawampus"); or the prologue to the immortal "Struwwelpeter," even the lengthy moralizings in "Water-Babies" still read very well, because Kingsley's intense conviction that you could not too often impress upon the young that they must always be good gives them vitality. Nowadays, when they preach at all, the books preach half-heartedly, and with the old gusto the humour has departed too. However, the point is that children who do not already possess these books can have them this Christmas in agreeable form—though, judging by the light of memory—which, casting back to such a remote period as the first reading of these stories, is apt to be not entirely trustworthy—some fairly extensive "cuts" have been made

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First the long stories. Here, at the outset it is necessary to be a little more cheerful about the literary prospects of the contemporary child. "Mumbudget," by Helen Simpson (Heinemann, 6s.), is a really good book, and, what is even more surprising, it is a good book about fairies. It is true that they are, with the exception of a brownie met on a visit to England, Irish fairies, who have somehow escaped the contamination of the lollipop prettiness which long ago in the time of Elizabeth turned the English variety into Christmas tree ornaments. "Mr. Wind and Madam Rain," from the French of Paul de Musset (Blackie, 1s. 6d.), is a pleasant little story, and explains incidentally "why mackintoshes are worn so much in London, and why an Englishman never goes far from home without taking his umbrella with him." "Young Peggy in Toyland," by Archibald Marshall (Collins, 6s.), has an exciting plot, and pictures by Mabel Lucie Attwell. "Mary Tary," by H. B. Cresswell (Oxford, 6s.), is a collection of short stories, but all with the same hero and heroine, and is of the attractive type where the psychology is true to life, but the adventures rather better than most people can hope to experience. "The Dutch Twins," by Lucy Fitch Perkins (Jonathan Cape, 5s.), is the fifth of a series by this author on the life of children in different countries. "The Thrills of Tiny Tongaat," by Emmeline Hale (Religious Tract Society, 2s. 6d.), is a good tale about a Zulu boy. The title of "The Pony that Ran Away to Sea," by Admiral Sir Edmund Pears (Oxford, 5s.), pretty well explains the book. There are lively pictures by G. D. Rowlandson. "The Children at the Grange," by Horace Smith (Oxford, 2s.), is about children who try to track down a thief, which it is perhaps sentimental to feel is an unsuitable subject. "Soldier Boy," by Félicite Lefèvre, illustrated by Tony Sarg (Medici Society, 5s.), has a charming appearance.

The books of verse have a certain sameness, they are pretty and fanciful, and occasionally accomplished, but in general they lack style and that quality which can perhaps best be described as "zip." Rose Fyleman has a book of "Old-Fashioned Girls" (Methuen, 7s. 6d.), in which she has attempted to reproduce the Victorian manner: this apparently is not so easy as it looks, and only one of the twelve, the last, has the authentic note. The other verses in the book, in her own very popular vein, are more successful. The coloured pictures of the old-fashioned girls by Ethel Everitt should give great pleasure. "Magic Rhymes," by Alfred Dunning (Blackie, 2s.), is written as it were by a child, in the manner of Stevenson and A. A. Milne. "The Littlest One's Third Book," by Marion St. John Webb (Harrap, 2s. 6d.), is not only written as it were by a child, but in baby-talk, and would be embarrassing to read aloud. "The Very Thing," by Frida Wolfe (Sidgwick & Jackson, 6s.), is also supposed to be the child talking, and contains some pretty pieces. "An Alphabet of Magic," by Eleanor Farjeon (The Medici Society, 6s.), is more ambitious and very accomplished, illustrated with pencil drawings by Margaret Tarrant. "Polichinelle" (Oxford, 7s. 6d.) is a collection of the enchanting old French nursery songs—Cadet Rouselle, le Roi d'Yvetot, and a fair selection of the rest—with music, and an English translation by J. R. Monsell. "Pillcock Hill," by Herbert Asquith (Oxford, 6s.), is set to music by Alec Rowley. "The Nutcracker Family," verses by Mabel Stevenson, pictures by A. J. Shackel (Religious Tract Society, 6s.), is a long story in three parts, with a good deal happening, all told in rollicking verse. "Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes" (Collins, 7s. 6d.), is a collection of proverbs and rhyme games, arranged by Lawrence Alma-Tadema, and illustrated by Charles Robinson.

As for the Annuals, there is not much to be said, except that here they are—"The Oxford Annual for Children" (Oxford, 5s.) ; "Blackie's Children's Annual" (Blackie, 5s.) ; "Collins's Children's Annual" (Collins, 5s.) ; Messrs. Wells

Gardner issue "The Golden Year Annual" (5s.), without prejudice to the continued appearance of "The Prize" (2s.), which one would have been sorry to see no more. Probably it is the same with Annuals as with papers—the regular subscribers can see subtle differences between them which are not revealed to the casual eye. To an outsider, however, they are all equally opulent, and handsome, and optimistic.

In the last small class, the instructive, there are four books by Eric Fitch Daglish (J. M. Dent, 2s. 6d. apiece) on birds and animals, illustrated with woodcuts by the author which are quite admirable. The information is conveyed in the right way, and the pictures are clear and good.

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BLUEBEARD FROM THE PORTUGUESE

The Brownings. By OSBERT BURDETT. (Constable. 15s.)

FAIRY tales reincarnate lack as a rule the strong contrasts and colouring of their originals, but the story of the Barrett family satisfies all our human craving for positives and extremes. It will be rewritten and reread with relish for many generations still, for Mr. Barrett, although we do not know the colour of his beard, was positively an extremely bad man, and his children were quite inhumanly good and docile, especially the first-born, Elizabeth, who wore her hair in appropriate ringlets. His wife "could 'never resist,' and exhausted by child-bearing and by Mr. Barrett, thinned away before the youngest of her eleven children was very old." Mr. Barrett must have been grieved, for his tyranny was the type that does not desire the death of its victims, but only their death in life. He took pains to dress himself up for his part in all sanctimonious circumstance, parental solicitude, and Scriptural authority, and had an eye even to the stage settings. When he bought "Hope End," three years after Elizabeth's birth, he pulled the house down in order to make room for a "semi-oriental mansion, garnished with minarets and Turkish windows." This was in Herefordshire in 1809, several years before Byron had popularized the architecture with the morals of the Near East, so Mr. Barrett could claim to have been inspired solely by his private demon. Everyone knows how Robert Browning became the first Childe Rowland to blow a defiant horn at Mr. Barrett's Dark Tower, and how by obeying all the rules of the game of saviours (no easy business) he finally rescued Burd Ellen. Captain Surtees Cook as the second horn-blower, and carrying off Elizabeth's sister Henrietta, makes a less romantic picture, but his case proves the reality of the difficulties, and the genuine ogreism of the father. It took Captain Cook five years to extricate Henrietta, although he was a friend of the family—whereas Browning was only "that pomegranate man"—and Henrietta was no invalid as Elizabeth had been. The same fatherly curses as had followed poor Elizabeth, almost too weak to flutter out of her cage even when the door was held wide open, followed Henrietta too. In fact Edward alone of the children escaped from Mr. Barrett's clutches without thereby earning his undying hatred—Edward was drowned in Babbacombe Bay.

The courtship of Elizabeth Barrett by Robert Browning is a Christina Rossetti parable with an unorthodox ending; often the flesh and blood of the protagonists fade from them and it becomes impossible to think of the house in Wimpole Street as merely No. 50 and innocent of a drawbridge. These are symbols of Artistic Creation or perhaps of the sufferings of the Christian Church. Miss Barrett's own letters are full of images which feed the illusion of a parable; she speaks of "the trailing chain of her weakness," of the impossibility of walking across her father's displeasure, "spread on the

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threshold of the door," and says in the very accents of a Rossetti princess urged to go out and taste the spring: "To me the snowdrop is much the same as the snow and it feels as cold underfoot." And when at last the marriage had been secretly performed (Inspiration wedded to Form? The Church rescued from the World?) she was very agitated and felt as if she had slipped down the wall into somebody's garden.

Mr. Burdett's book is a worthy monument to the lives and works of the two poets, and it is pleasant to think of it being read aloud in the quiet Browning strongholds, where the Browningites,

" Still sit unconquered in a ring
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First he introduces the two poets through their own early works, then tells the love story through the letters, and then their married life through their later works, so that the book is a critical study and comparison both of the two writers and of their poetry. The plan of the book is new, but it presents nothing very new in actual criticism. Mr. Burdett is at his best in comments and asides, as he dusts over again very conscientiously the fragile and often exquisite bric-à-brac of the Barrett-Browning letters and the poems of personal significance. We have grown so used to acidity in biography that his level sympathy cloyes a little, though perhaps to the healthy palate it should not cloy. He unfolds admirably that able and impeccable performance which was Browning's life, and does full justice to his vigour and alertness. "He chose a pair of gloves as thoughtfully as he would have chosen a revolver, and he put them on to pay a call as gravely as for a boxing match." It all fits in with Browning as a good poet, but not a very good poet. There is a roundness to Browning's life so perfect it reminds one of a tennis ball rather than of the globe, and a tidiness in it which belongs to a chest of drawers, but not to nature. It is true he lived vitally and variously, but he always returned at nights to a quiet house and clean sheets, and when he fell desperately in love he endured eighteen months of headaches with a patience that would have astounded even Chaucer.

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